BY CANADIAN STREAMS

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BY

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THE RIVERS OF CANADA

Who that has travelled upon their far-spreading waters has not felt the compelling charm of the rivers of Canada? The matchless variety of their scenery, from the gentle grace of the Sissibou to the tempestuous grandeur of the Fraser; the romance that clings to their shores--legends and tales of Micmac and Iroquois, Cree, Blackfoot, and Chilcotin; stories of peaceful Acadian villages beside the Gaspereau, and fortified towns along the St. Lawrence; of warlike expeditions and missionary enterprises up the Richelieu and the Saguenay; of heroic exploits at the Long Sault and at Verchères; of memorable explorations in the north and the far west? How many of us realise the illimitable possibilities of these arteries of a nation, their vital importance as avenues of commerce and communication, the potential energy stored in their rushing waters? Do we even appreciate their actual extent, or thoroughly grasp the fact that this network of waterways covers half a continent, and reaches every corner of this vast Dominion?

Two hundred years ago little was known of these rivers outside the valley of the St. Lawrence. One hundred years later scores of new waterways had been explored from source to outlet, some of them ranking among the great rivers of the earth. The Western Sea, that had lured the restless sons of New France toward the setting sun, that had furnished a dominating impulse to her explorers, from

Jacques Cartier to La Vérendrye, was at last reached by Canadians of another race--and the road that they travelled was the water-road that connects three oceans. In their frail canoes these tireless pathfinders journeyed up the mighty St. Lawrence and its great tributary the Ottawa, through Lake Nipissing, and down the French river to Georgian Bay; they skirted the shores of the inland seas to the head of Lake Superior, and by way of numberless portages crossed the almost indistinguishable height of land to Rainy Lake and the beautiful Lake of the Woods. They descended the wild Winnipeg to Lake Winnipeg, paddled up the Saskatchewan to Cumberland House, turned north by way of Frog Portage to the Churchill, and ascended that waterway to its source, where they climbed over Meythe Portage--famous in the annals of exploration and the fur trade--to the Clearwater, a branch of the Athabaska, and so came to Fort Chipewyan, on Lake Athabaska. Descending Slave River for a few miles, they came to the mouth of Peace River, and after many days' weary paddling were in sight of the Rocky Mountains. Still ascending the same river, they traversed the mountains, and by other streams were borne down the western slope to the shores of the remote Pacific.

The world offers no parallel to this extraordinary water-road from the Atlantic to the Pacific; nor is the tale all told. From that great central reservoir, that master-key to the whole system of water communications, the traveller might turn his canoe in any direction, and traverse the length and breadth of the continent to its most remote boundaries: east to the Atlantic, west to the Pacific, north to the Arctic or to Hudson Bay, and south to the Gulf of Mexico.

The story of Canadian rivers would fill several volumes if one attempted to do justice to such a broad and varied theme. One may only hope, in the few pages that follow, to give glimpses of the story; to suggest, however inadequately, the dramatic and romantic possibilities of the subject; to recall a few of the memories that cling to the rivers of Canada.

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By Canadian Streams

I

THE GREAT RIVER OF CANADA

He told them of the river whose mighty current gave
Its freshness for a hundred leagues to ocean's briny wave;
He told them of the glorious scene presented to his sight,
What time he reared the cross and crown on Hochelaga's height,
And of the fortress cliff that keeps of Canada the key,
And they welcomed back Jacques Cartier from his perils over sea.
McGEE.

If we abandon ourselves to pure conjecture, we may carry the history of the St. Lawrence back to the beginning of the sixteenth century, when daring Portuguese navigators sailed into these northern latitudes; or to the latter half of the fifteenth century, when the Basque fishermen are said to have brought their adventurous little craft into the Gulf of St. Lawrence; or, if you please, we may push the curtain back to the tenth century and add another variant to the many theories as to the course of the Northmen from Labrador to Nova Scotia. But while this would

make a romantic story, it is not history. The Vikings of Northern Europe, and the Portuguese and Basques of Southern Europe, *may* have sailed the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and *may* even have entered the estuary of the great river, but there is no evidence that they did, and we must surrender these picturesque myths if we are to build our story upon a tangible foundation.

With the advent of Jacques Cartier, the bluff and fearless mariner of St. Malo, we are upon the solid ground of history. There is nothing vague or uncertain about either the personality or achievements of this Breton captain. He tells his own story, in simple and convincing language. It does not require any peculiar gift of imagination to picture the scene that marks the beginnings of the history of the St. Lawrence. It was upon an autumn day, some three hundred and seventy-four years since. Jacques Cartier, with his little fleet, had searched up and down the coasts of the gulf for the elusive and much-desired passage to the South Seas, but the passage was not there. His Indian guides, Taignoagny and Domagaya, had told him something of the mighty stream--the Great River of Canada--upon whose waters his ships were even now sailing. How almost incredible it must have seemed to him that this vast channel, twenty-five miles across from shore to shore, could be a river, and nothing more! What thoughts must have surged through his brain that here at last was the long-sought passage, the road to golden Cathay! Even when, as he sailed onward, it became certain that this was indeed a river, although a gigantic one, Jacques Cartier still had reason enough to follow its beckoning finger. The Indians said that to explore its upper waters he must take to his boats; but they told him of three several native kingdoms that lay along its banks, and they assured him that its source was so remote that no man had ever journeyed so far. Moreover, it came from the south-west, and there lay, and at no impossible distance, as report had it, the Vermilion Sea. He might well hope to reach that sea by way of the River of Canada. In any event, he determined to try.

A week later the ships were anchored off an island, which Cartier named the Isle of Bacchus, because of the abundance of grapes found upon its shores. Before him rose the forest-clad heights of Cape Diamond, destined to become the key to a Colonial empire, the battling-ground of three great nations, the site of the most picturesque and most romantic city of America. Even at this time the place was of some importance, for here stood the native town of Stadacona, the seat of Donnacona, "Lord of Canada."

While the ships rode at anchor, Donnacona came down the river with twelve canoes and a number of his people. His welcoming harangue astonished Cartier, as much by its inordinate length as by the extraordinary animation with which it was delivered. The explorer wasted no time, however, in ceremonies. The season was drawing on, and much remained to be accomplished. Finding safe quarters for two of his vessels in the St. Charles River he continued his voy-

age in the third, in spite of the opposition of Donnacona and his people, who with true native jealousy would have prevented his further progress. The ship had to be left behind at the mouth of the Richelieu, but with two boats, manned by some of his sailors, Cartier pushed on to the third native kingdom, Hochelaga, which he reached about the beginning of October. His reception here was embarrassing in its enthusiasm, for the people of Hochelaga testified their faith in the godlike character of their visitor by bringing the sick and the maimed to him to be healed by his touch.

Climbing the mountain behind the Indian town--which still bears the name he then gave it of Mont Royal--Cartier eagerly scanned the country to the westward. He could trace the St. Lawrence on one side, and on the other saw for the first time its great tributary the Ottawa. The way was still open, but rapids barred the further progress of his boats. It was too late to do anything more this season, and, taking leave of the friendly people of Hochelaga, he returned down the river to Stadacona, where in his absence his men had built a substantial fort for the winter. With all their preparations, however, a wretched winter was passed. The Indians, at first friendly, became distrustful under the treacherous influence of Domagaya and Taignoagny, and kept Cartier and his men constantly on guard against a possible attack. Added to this, the little garrison had to endure the horrors of scurvy. When in the following May Cartier made ready to sail back to France, he found it necessary to abandon one of his ships and distribute the men between the other two vessels. As some satisfaction for the annoyance he had suffered at the hands of the Indians, Cartier succeeded in carrying away to France not only the troublesome Taignoagny and several of his companions, but also the chief, Donnacona.

Cartier sailed for Canada once more in 1541, but only fragmentary accounts are available of this voyage. The honest captain of St. Malo never succeeded in finding the Vermilion Sea, but he had accomplished what was of more importance to future generations--the discovery and exploration of the noblest of Canadian rivers. No one who came after him could add anything material to this momentous achievement.

For more than half a century after Cartier's final return to France, the St. Lawrence was practically abandoned to its native tribes. In 1608, however, another famous son of Old France sailed up the St. Lawrence and landed with his men at the foot of the same towering rock upon which the Indian town of Stadacona had formerly stood. Nothing now remained of Donnacona's capital, or of the tribe that once occupied the district. The Iroquois, who in Cartier's day dwelt along the borders of the St. Lawrence from Stadacona to Hochelaga, had for some unaccountable reason abandoned this part of the country, and were now settled between Lake Champlain and Lake Ontario. Champlain and those who came after

him were to find a very different welcome from the descendants of the Indians who had welcomed Jacques Cartier to Stadacona and Hochelaga.

Somewhere near the market-place of the Lower Town, Champlain's men fell to work to lay the foundations of Quebec. One may get some idea of the appearance of the group of buildings, Champlain's *Abitation*, from his own rough sketch in the *Voyages*. "My first care," he says, "was to build a house within which to store our provisions. This was promptly and competently done through the activity of my men, and under my own supervision. Near by is the St. Croix River, where of yore Cartier spent a winter. While carpenters toiled and other mechanics were at work on the house, the others were busy making a clearance about our future abode; for as the land seemed fertile, I was anxious to plant a garden and determine whether wheat and other cereals could not be grown to advantage."

All Champlain's men were not, however, so innocently engaged. There was a traitor in the camp. The story is told by Champlain himself, and by the historian Lescarbot. It has been re-told, in his characteristically simple and graphic manner, by Francis Parkman.

"Champlain was one morning directing his labourers when Têtu, his pilot, approached him with an anxious countenance, and muttered a request to speak with him in private. Champlain assenting, they withdrew to the neighbouring woods, when the pilot disburdened himself of his secret. One Antoine Natel, a locksmith, smitten by conscience or fear, had revealed to him a conspiracy to murder his commander and deliver Quebec into the hands of the Basques and Spaniards then at Tadoussac. Another locksmith, named Duval, was author of the plot, and, with the aid of three accomplices, had befooled or frightened nearly all the company into taking part in it. Each was assured that he should make his fortune, and all were mutually pledged to poniard the first betrayer of the secret. The critical point of their enterprise was the killing of Champlain. Some were for strangling him, some for raising a false alarm in the night and shooting him as he came out from his quarters.

"Having heard the pilot's story, Champlain, remaining in the woods, desired his informant to find Antoine Natel, and bring him to the spot. Natel soon appeared, trembling with excitement and fear, and a close examination left no doubt of the truth of his statement. A small vessel, built by Pont-Gravé at Tadoussac, had lately arrived, and orders were now given that it should anchor close at hand. On board was a young man in whom confidence could be placed. Champlain sent him two bottles of wine, with a direction to tell the four ringleaders that they had been given him by his Basque friends at Tadoussac, and to invite them to share the good cheer. They came aboard in the evening, and were seized and secured. 'Voyla donc mes galants bien estonnez,' writes Champlain.

"It was ten o'clock, and most of the men on shore were asleep. They were wakened suddenly, and told of the discovery of the plot and the arrest of the ringleaders. Pardon was then promised them, and they were dismissed again to their beds, greatly relieved, for they had lived in trepidation, each fearing the other. Duval's body, swinging from a gibbet, gave wholesome warning to those he had seduced; and his head was displayed on a pike, from the highest roof of the buildings, food for birds, and a lesson to sedition. His three accomplices were carried by Pont-Gravé to France, where they made their atonement in the galleys."

Of Champlain's later history, his expedition against the Iroquois, by way of the Richelieu River and the lake to which he gave his name, and his exploration of the Ottawa, something will be said in later chapters.

The next great event in the history of New France, after the founding of Quebec by Champlain, was the coming of the Jesuit missionaries; but though their headquarters were at Quebec, the field of their heroic labours was for the most part in what now constitute the Province of Ontario and the State of New York. Their story does not therefore touch directly upon the St. Lawrence, except in so far as that river was their road to and from the Iroquois towns and the country of the Hurons. Indeed, by the middle of the seventeenth century, the St. Lawrence had become the main thoroughfare of New France. A fort had been built at the mouth of the Richelieu, a small trading settlement existed at Three Rivers, and Maisonneuve had laid the foundations of Montreal. Between Quebec and these new centres of population there was more or less intercourse, and the river bore up and down the vessels of fur-trader and merchant, priest and soldier. The St. Lawrence was the highway of commerce, the path of the missionary, the road of war, and the one and only means of communication for the scattered colonists. Up stream came warlike expeditions against the troublesome Iroquois; and down stream came the Iroquois themselves, with increasing insolence, until they finally carried their raids down to the very walls of Quebec. The St. Lawrence was not safe travelling in those days, for white men or red.

During one of these forays, the Iroquois had captured two settlers, one Godefroy and François Marguerie, an interpreter, both of Three Rivers. When some months later the war party returned to attack Three Rivers, they brought the Frenchmen with them, and sent Marguerie to the commander of the fort with disgraceful terms. Marguerie urged his people to reject the offer, and then, keeping his pledged word even to savages, returned to face almost certain torture. Fortunately, reinforcements arrived from Quebec in the nick of time, and the Iroquois, finding themselves at a disadvantage, consented to the ransom of their prisoners.

In this same year, 1641, a little fleet which had set forth from Rochelle some weeks before dropped anchor at Quebec, and from the ships landed Paul de Chomedey, Sieur de Maisonneuve, with a party of enthusiasts destined to found

a religious settlement on the island of Montreal. They were coldly received by the Governor and people of Quebec, who were too weak themselves to care to see the tide of population diverted to a new settlement far up the river. Maisonneuve, however, turned a deaf ear to all their arguments. "I have not come here," he said, "to deliberate, but to act. It is my duty and my honour to found a colony at Montreal; and I would go, if every tree were an Iroquois!"

In May of the following year the expedition set forth for Montreal. With Maisonneuve went two women, whose names were to be closely associated with the early history of Montreal--Jeanne Mance and Madame de la Peltrie. The Governor, Montmagny, making a virtue of necessity, also accompanied the expedition. A more willing companion was Father Vimont, Superior of the missions.

It was the seventeenth of the month when the odd little flotilla--a pinnace, a flat-bottomed craft driven by sails, and a couple of row-boats--approached their destination. The following day they landed at what was afterwards known as Point Callière. The scene is best described in the words of Parkman:

"Maisonneuve sprang ashore, and fell on his knees. His followers imitated his example; and all joined their voices in enthusiastic songs of thanksgiving. Tents, baggage, arms, and stores were landed. An altar was raised on a pleasant spot near at hand; and Mademoiselle Mance, with Madame de la Peltrie, aided by her servant, Charlotte Barré, decorated it with a taste which was the admiration of the beholders. Now all the company gathered before the shrine. Here stood Vimont, in the rich vestments of his office. Here were the two ladies with their servant; Montmagny, no very willing spectator; and Maisonneuve, a warlike figure, erect and tall, his men clustering around him--soldiers, sailors, artisans, and labourers--all alike soldiers at need. They kneeled in reverent silence as the Host was raised aloft; and when the rite was over, the priest turned and addressed them: 'You are a grain of mustard-seed, that shall rise and grow till its branches overshadow the earth. You are few, but your work is the work of God. His smile is on you, and your children shall fill the land.'

"The afternoon waned; the sun sank behind the western forest, and twilight came on. Fireflies were twinkling over the darkened meadow. They caught them, tied them with threads into shining festoons, and hung them before the altar, where the Host remained exposed. Then they pitched their tents, lighted their bivouac fires, stationed their guards, and lay down to rest. Such was the birth-night of Montreal."

Farther down the St. Lawrence, near the mouth of the Richelieu, stood the fortified home of the Seigneur de la Verchères. This little fort was from its position peculiarly exposed to the attacks of the Iroquois. Yet men must live, whatever the risks might be. Urgent business called the Seigneur to Quebec. Perhaps nothing had been seen or heard of the dreaded scourge in the neighbourhood for

some time. At any rate, whether from a sense of fancied security, or from necessity which must sometimes ignore danger, most of the men were working in the fields, at some distance from the fort. Suddenly there was a cry, "The Iroquois!" Madeleine, the fourteen-year-old daughter of the Seigneur, was at the gate. She called in some women who were near at hand, and barred the entrance. Two soldiers were in the fort, but they were paralysed with fear. Madeleine took charge, shamed the soldiers into at least a semblance of manhood, set every one to work to repair the defences, and set up dummies upon the walls to deceive the Indians into the belief that the fort was well garrisoned. She armed her two young brothers, twelve and ten years of age, and an old man of eighty, and carried out the deception by a ceaseless patrol throughout the night.

Meanwhile the men in the fields had escaped, and were on their way to Montreal for assistance. But Montreal was far off in those days, and the relief was slow in coming. The next day, and the next, Madeleine, by her own heroic will, kept up the spirits of her little garrison, and they made such good use of their guns that the Iroquois dared not come to close quarters. When day followed day without the appearance of the hoped-for succour, the plucky girl had to struggle with desperate energy to maintain the defence. She herself took no rest, but went from place to place, cheering the flagging spirits of her brothers, and foiling the enemy at every turn. At last, when a full week had gone by, the relief party arrived from Montreal, and at their appearance the Iroquois hastily withdrew. The men had expected to find the fort in ruins; they were agreeably surprised to find all safe; but their amazement knew no bounds when the gate was opened and they discovered what manner of garrison it was that had held at bay for a week a strong party of the ferocious Iroquois.

One might fill many pages with such stories as these, for the early history of the Great River of Canada, and of the settlements that grew up along its banks, is packed with romantic incidents and dramatic situations. These must, however, be left to other hands if we are to find space for the stories of other Canadian streams.

II

THE MYSTIC SAGUENAY

Pile on pile
The granite masses rise to left and right;
Bald, stately bluffs that never wear a smile....
And we must pass a thousand bluffs like these,
Within whose breasts are locked a myriad mysteries.
SANGSTER.

The Saguenay is first heard of in the narrative of Cartier's second voyage. On his way to Canada, the realm of the Iroquois sachem, Donnacona, he came, early in September 1535, to the mouth of a great river flowing into the St. Lawrence from the west. His native guides told him that this river, whose gloomy majesty was to be the theme of many later travellers, was the main road to the "kingdom of Saguenay." One may well believe that the adventurous captain of St. Malo would gladly have turned his ships between the towering portals of the Saguenay, for the pure joy of discovery, had not a greater project lured him toward the south-west.

While his vessels were anchored off the mouth of the river, his attention was drawn to a curious fish "which no man had ever before seen or heard of." The Indians called them adhothuys, and told him that they were found only in such places as this, where the waters of sea and river mingled. Cartier says they were as large as porpoises, had the head and body of a greyhound, and were as white as snow and without a spot. These white porpoises, as they are now called, are still found at the mouth of the Saguenay. At one time their capture formed an important part of the fisheries of Tadoussac.

There is a romantic tradition that de Roberval sailed up the Saguenay with a company of adventurers, about the year 1549, in search of a kingdom of fabulous riches, and that he and his men perished on the way. It is probable, however, that the expedition had as little foundation as the kingdom it was designed to exploit.

Half a century later the first settlement was made at Tadoussac, at the mouth of the Saguenay. For many years this had been a meeting-place for the Basque traders and the Indians from the interior, but it was not until the year 1600 that anything in the nature of a permanent post had been established. In that year Pierre de Chauvin, Pont-Gravé, and de Monts, sailed for the St. Lawrence, built a house at Tadoussac, and left sixteen men there for the winter to carry on the fur-trade. The venture was not a success, and the place was abandoned the following year, but Tadoussac remained for many years an important point in the fur-trade. It is said that in 1648 the traffic amounted to 250,000 livres. A church built here by the missionaries a hundred years later is still standing. Tadoussac is chiefly known to-day as one of the favourite watering-places on the Lower St. Lawrence.

It was not until three years after de Chauvin built his trading-post at Tadoussac that the Saguenay was actually explored. Champlain and Pont-Gravé had sailed from Honfleur, in March 1603, on the *Bonne-Renommée*, to explore the country and find some more suitable place than Tadoussac for a permanent settlement. After meeting a number of friendly Indians at Tadoussac, Champlain determined to explore the Saguenay, and actually sailed up to the head of navigation, a little above the present town of Chicoutimi. By shrewd questions he learned from the Indians that above the rapids the river was navigable for some distance, that it was again broken by rapids at its outlet from a big lake (Lake St. John), that three rivers fell into this lake, and that beyond these rivers were strange tribes who lived on the borders of the sea. This sea was the great bay, as yet undiscovered, where Henry Hudson was seven years later to win an imperishable name, and die a victim to the treachery of his crew.

In 1608 Champlain again visited Tadoussac, on his way up the St. Lawrence to lay the foundations of Quebec. His companion, Pont-Gravé, had arrived in another vessel a few days before, armed with the King's commission granting him a monopoly of the fur-trade for one year. When he reached Tadoussac he found the enterprising Basques already on the ground, and carrying on a brisk trade with the Indians. They treated the royal letters with contempt, ridiculed Pont-Gravé's monopoly, and, finally boarding his ship, carried off his guns and ammunition. The opportune arrival of Champlain, however, brought them to terms, and they finally agreed to return to their legitimate occupation of catching whales, leaving the fur-trade, for a time at least, to Pont-Gravé and Champlain.

The Indians who chiefly frequented Tadoussac at this time were of the tribe called Montagnais. Their hunting-ground was the country drained by the Saguenay, and they acted as middlemen for the tribes of the far north, bringing their furs down to the French at Tadoussac, and carrying back the prized trinkets of the white man, which they no doubt bartered to their northerly neighbours at an exorbitant profit.

"Indefatigable canoe-men," says Parkman, "in their birchen vessels, light as egg-shells, they threaded the devious tracks of countless rippling streams, shady by-ways of the forest, where the wild duck scarcely finds depth to swim; then descended to their mart along those scenes of picturesque yet dreary grandeur which steam has made familiar to modern tourists. With slowly moving paddles, they glided beneath the cliff whose shaggy brows frown across the zenith, and whose base the deep waves wash with a hoarse and hollow cadence; and they passed the sepulchral Bay of the Trinity, dark as the tide of Acheron,--a sanctuary of solitude and silence: depths which, as the fable runs, no sounding-line can fathom, and heights at whose dizzy verge the wheeling eagle seems a speck."

Fifty-eight years after Champlain's voyage up the Saguenay, two Jesuit mis-

sionaries, Claude Dablon and Gabriel Druillettes, set forth from Tadoussac with a large party of Indians in forty canoes. Their object was to meet the northern Indians at Lake Nekouba, near the height of land, and if possible push on to Hudson Bay. It is clear from their narrative that French traders or missionaries had already ascended the Saguenay as far as Lake St. John, but beyond that Dablon and Druillettes entered upon a country which was hitherto unknown to the French. After suffering great hardships, the party at last arrived at Lake Nekouba, where they found a large gathering of Indians, representing many of the surrounding tribes. But while the missionaries were addressing the Indians, word came that a war party of Mohawks had penetrated even to these remote fastnesses. So overpowering was the dread which these redoubtable warriors had inspired among all the tribes of North-eastern America, that the gathering broke up in confusion. Every man made off to his own home, hoping that he might not meet an Iroquois at the portage; and as the Indians of Father Dablon's party were as fear-stricken as the rest, all idea of continuing the journey to Hudson Bay had to be abandoned, and the missionaries were obliged to retrace their steps to Tadoussac.

A decade later, another missionary, Father Albanel, with a Colonial officer, Denys de Saint Simon, were more fortunate. Following Dablon's route to the height of land, they pushed on to Lake Mistassini, and descended Rupert's River to Hudson Bay, where they found a small vessel flying the English flag, and two houses, but the English themselves were apparently away on some trading expedition.

The Jesuit missionaries seemed to have discovered at an early date the advantages of Lake St. John as the site of one of their missions. In 1808 the ruins of their settlement were still visible on the south side of the lake. James McKenzie, of the North-West Company, who visited the "King's Posts" in that year, says that "the plum and apple trees of their garden, grown wild through want of care, yet bear fruit in abundance. The foundation of their church and other buildings, as well as the churchyard, are still visible. The bell of their church, two iron spades, a horseshoe, a scythe and a bar of iron two feet in length, have lately been dug out of the ruins of this apparently once flourishing spot, and, adjoining, is an extensive plain or meadow on which much timothy hay grows." Elsewhere Mr. McKenzie mentions that the Fathers had mills on Lake St. John, some of the materials used in their construction having been found there by officers of the North-West Company. He adds that an island in the lake, not far from where the mission formerly stood, swarms with snakes, which a local tradition credited to the power of the worthy Jesuits. The Fathers found them inconveniently numerous about their settlement, and conjured them on to the island.

A settlement of some kind was made at Chicoutimi, on the Saguenay, early in the eighteenth century. A chapel and store, still standing in 1808, bore an in-

scription that they had been built in 1707. Father Coquart records that in 1750 there was a saw-mill on the River Oupaouétiche, one and a half leagues above Chicoutimi, which worked two saws night and day.

III

THE RIVER OF ACADIA

Along my fathers' dykes I roam again,
Among the willows by the river-side.
These miles of green I know from hill to tide,
And every creek and river's ruddy stain.
Neglected long and shunned, our dead have lain.
Here, where a people's dearest hope has died,
Alone of all their children scattered wide,
I scan the sad memorials that remain.
HERBIN.

Some time about the middle of the seventeenth century, an Acadian, sailing perhaps from Port Royal in search of peltries or of mere adventure, brought his little vessel by great good luck safely through that treacherous channel, guarded at one end by Cape Split and at the other by the frowning crest of Blomidon, and found himself upon the placid waters of the Basin of Minas. Champlain had sailed across the mouth of the basin in 1604, and had called it the Port des Mines, because of certain copper-mines which he had been led to expect there. This Acadian found something better than copper-mines. Safely past Blomidon, he came to a land which nature seemed to have set apart as the home of an industrious and peace-loving people. Somewhere about the mouth of the Gaspereau he built his home. Others followed, and in time a long, straggling village grew up; willows were planted, which stand to-day as a memorial of this Acadian colony; and after years of toil they completed that still more impressive monument of Acadian industry,

the "long ramparts of their dykes," by which they fenced out the sea from the rich and fertile lowlands, and turned these once tide-swept flats into green meadows.

The Gaspereau country must have been beautiful enough when the Acadians first came to make their home there, but in the years of their occupation they gave to the landscape, quite unconsciously no doubt, certain subtle touches that turned it into something little less than an earthly paradise. Standing upon the ridge and looking down into the valley of the Gaspereau, one sees a scene that it not very materially changed from the days of the Acadians--after one has eliminated such modern excrescences as railways and bridges. The village of Grand Pré would have to be rearranged, no doubt. There was less of it in the first half of the eighteenth century; it did not cover quite the same ground; but no doubt a traveller who came that way in 1750 would have seen in the vale beneath many such picturesque cottages embowered in the self-same trees, and the rest of the scene would have been much the same as he would see to-day. Charles Roberts, the Canadian poet, novelist, and historian, has made a word-picture of it. "The picture is an exquisite pastoral. Among such deep fields, such billowy groves, and such embosomed farmsteads might Theocritus have wrought his idylls to the hum of the heavy bees. Along the bottom of the sun-brimmed vale sparkles the river, between its banks of wild rose and convolvulus, with here and there a clump of grey-green willows, here and there a red-and-white bridge. As it nears its mouth the Gaspereau changes its aspect. Its complexion of clear amber grows yellow and opaque as it mixes with the uprushing tides of Minas, and its widened channel winds through a riband of dyked marshes."

This is the valley of the Gaspereau, one of the most beautiful spots in the beautiful province of Nova Scotia. This, too, in that far-off autumn of 1755, was the scene of one of the most pathetic and tragic incidents in the history of America. It would serve no useful purpose to discuss that much-debated question of the whys and wherefores of the expulsion of the Acadians. The story of the actual tragedy is all we have space for here. That story is alone sufficient to make the Gaspereau famous among rivers of Canada, and it is best told in the language of Francis Parkman. Governor Lawrence had summoned the deputies of the Acadian settlements to appear before him at Halifax, to take the oath of allegiance and fidelity. They came, but flatly refused to take the oath. The Governor and Council thereupon decided that the only thing that remained to be done was to deport them from the colony. John Winslow, a Colonial officer from Massachusetts, was charged with the duty of securing the inhabitants about the Basin of Minas. On August 14, 1755, he set forth from his camp at Fort Beausejour, with a force of but two hundred and ninety-seven men. He sailed down Chignecto Channel to the Bay of Fundy. "Here, while they waited the turn of the tide to enter the Basin of Minas," says Parkman, "the shores of Cumberland lay before them dim

in the hot and hazy air, and the promontory of Cape Split, like some misshapen monster of primeval chaos, stretched its portentous length along the glimmering sea, with head of yawning rock, and ridgy back bristled with forests. Borne on the rushing flood, they soon drifted through the inlet, glided under the rival promontory of Cape Blomidon, passed the red sandstone cliffs of Lyon's Cove, and descried the mouths of the Rivers Canard and Des Habitants, where fertile marshes, diked against the tide, sustained a numerous and thriving population. Before them spread the boundless meadows of Grand Pré, waving with harvests, or alive with grazing cattle; the green slopes behind were dotted with the simple dwellings of the Acadian farmers, and the spire of the village church rose against a background of woody hills. It was a peaceful, rural scene, soon to become one of the most wretched spots on earth."

After conferring with his brother officer, Murray, who was encamped with his men on the banks of the Pisiquid, where the town of Windsor now stands, Winslow returned to Grand Pré. The Acadian elders were told to remove all sacred things from the village church, and the building was then used as a storehouse. The men pitched their tents outside, while Winslow took possession of the priest's house. A summons was sent to the male inhabitants of the district, over ten years of age, to attend at the church in Grand Pré, on the fifth of September, at three of the clock in the afternoon, "that we may impart what we are ordered to communicate to them; declaring that no excuse will be admitted on any pretence whatsoever, on pain of forfeiting goods and chattels in default."

"On the next day," continues Parkman, "the inhabitants appeared at the hour appointed, to the number of four hundred and eighteen men. Winslow ordered a table to be set in the middle of the church, and placed on it his instructions and the address he had prepared." It ran partly as follows: "The duty I am now upon, though necessary, is very disagreeable to my natural make and temper, as I know it must be grievous to you, who are of the same species. But it is not my business to animadvert on the orders I have received, but to obey them; and therefore without hesitation I shall deliver to you His Majesty's instructions and commands, which are that your lands and tenements and cattle and live-stock of all kinds are forfeited to the Crown, with all your other effects, except money and household goods, and that you yourselves are to be removed from this his province. The peremptory orders of His Majesty are that all the French inhabitants of these districts be removed; and through His Majesty's goodness I am directed to allow you the liberty of carrying with you your money and as many of your household goods as you can take without overloading the vessels you go in. I shall do everything in my power that all these goods be secured to you, and that you be not molested in carrying them away, and also that whole families shall go in the same vessel; so that this removal, which I am sensible must give you a great deal

of trouble, may be made as easy as His Majesty's service will admit; and I hope that in whatever part of the world your lot may fall, you may be faithful subjects, and a peaceable and happy people."

After weary weeks of delay, which tried Winslow's patience to the utmost, the transports at last arrived at the mouth of the Gaspereau, and the work of embarkation began. Up to the very last the Acadians could not believe that the order of deportation was serious, and when they finally realised their fate and knew that they must bid farewell for ever to their homes--the homes of their fathers, the land that they loved so well--their grief was indescribable. "Began to embark the inhabitants," says Winslow in his Diary, "who went off very solentarily and unwillingly, the women in great distress, carrying off their children in their arms; others carrying their decrepit parents in their carts, with all their goods; moving in great confusion, and appeared a scene of woe and distress." It was late in December before the last transport left the mouth of the Gaspereau. Altogether more than twenty-one hundred Acadians were exiled from Grand Pré and the country round about. They were distributed along the Atlantic coast, from Massachusetts to Georgia. Some made their way to Louisiana; some escaped and reached Canada. "Some," says Parkman, "after incredible hardship, made their way back to Acadia, where, after the peace, they remained unmolested, and, with those who had escaped seizure, became the progenitors of the present Acadians, now settled in various parts of the British maritime provinces." Few of them, however, returned at any time to Grand Pré, and that once thriving settlement remained desolate for several years, until at last British families straggled in and took up the waste lands of the unfortunate Acadians.

IV

THE WAR-PATH OF THE IROQUOIS

The story of the Richelieu River is a story of war and conflict. It opens just three hundred years ago, when Champlain set out from Quebec to join a war-party of Algonquins and Hurons, who had determined to seek the Iroquois in their own country, and had begged him to aid in the expedition. In consenting to do so, Champlain no doubt felt that he had good and sufficient reasons, but if he could

have foreseen the consequences of his act he would surely have left the Algonquins and Iroquois to settle their difficulties in their own way, for from this first act of aggression dates the implacable hatred of the Iroquois for the French, and a century and more of ferocious raids into every corner of the struggling colony.

Champlain, with his little party of French and a horde of naked savages, reached the mouth of the Richelieu, or the River of the Iroquois as it was then called, about the end of June 1609. The Indians quarrelled among themselves, and three-fourths of their number deserted and made off for home. The rest continued their course up the waters of the Richelieu. When they reached the rapids, above the Basin of Chambly, it was found impossible to take the shallop in which the French had travelled any farther. Sending most of his men back to Quebec, he himself, with two companions, determined to see the adventure through. After many days' hard paddling, the flotilla of canoes swept out on to the bosom of the noble lake which perpetuates the name of Champlain, and in the evening of the twenty-ninth of July they discovered the Iroquois in their canoes, near the point of land where Fort Ticonderoga was long afterwards built. The Iroquois made for the shore, and as night was falling it was mutually agreed to defer the battle until the following morning. The Iroquois threw up a barricade, while Champlain and his native allies spent the night in their canoes on the lake.

In the morning Champlain and his two men put on light armour, and the whole party landed at some distance from the Iroquois. "I saw the enemy go out of their barricade," says Champlain, "nearly two hundred in number, stout and rugged in appearance. They came at a slow pace towards us, with a dignity and assurance which greatly amused me, having three chiefs at their head. Our men also advanced in the same order, telling me that those who had three large plumes were the chiefs, and that I should do what I could to kill them. I promised to do all in my power.

"As soon as we had landed, they began to run for some two hundred paces towards their enemies, who stood firmly, not having as yet noticed my companions, who went into the woods with some savages. Our men began to call me with loud cries; and in order to give me a passage-way, they opened in two parts, and put me at their head, where I marched some twenty paces in advance of the rest, until I was within about thirty paces of the enemy, who at once noticed me, and, halting, gazed at me, as I did also at them. When I saw them making a move to fire at us, I rested my musket against my cheek, and aimed directly at one of the three chiefs. With the same shot two fell to the ground, and one of their men was so wounded that he died some time after. I had loaded my musket with four balls. When our side saw this shot so favourable for them, they began to raise such loud cries that one could not have heard it thunder. Meanwhile, the arrows flew on both sides. The Iroquois were greatly astonished that two men had been

so quickly killed, although they were equipped with armour woven from cotton thread, and with wood which was proof against their arrows. This caused great alarm among them. As I was loading again, one of my companions fired a shot from the woods, which astonished them anew to such a degree that, seeing their chiefs dead, they lost courage, and took to flight, abandoning their camp and fort, and fleeing into the woods, whither I pursued them, killing still more of them. Our savages also killed several, and took ten or twelve prisoners. The remainder escaped with the wounded.

"After gaining the victory, our men amused themselves by taking a great quantity of Indian corn and some meal from their enemies, also their armour, which they had left behind that they might run better. After feasting sumptuously, dancing and singing, we returned three hours after, with the prisoners."

On the return journey, the Algonquins tied one of the prisoners to a stake, and tortured him with such refinement of cruelty as to arouse the disgust and resentment of Champlain. Finally, they allowed him to put the wretched Iroquois out of his misery with a musket-ball. Arrived at the rapids, the Algonquins and Hurons returned to their own country, with loud protestations of friendship for Champlain, while the latter continued his journey down to Quebec.

If anything remained to heap the cup of Iroquois resentment to the brim, it was provided the following year, when Champlain again lent his assistance to the Algonquins and Hurons, and, encountering a war-party of Iroquois, a hundred strong, near the mouth of the Richelieu, killed or captured every one of them. The day was to come when the tables would be turned with a vengeance, when the war-cry of the Iroquois would be heard under the walls of Montreal and Quebec, and the death of each of the hundred warriors avenged a hundredfold.

But the sanguinary story of the Richelieu is not limited to Indian wars, or the conflict between Indian and French. In later years it was to become the road of war between white and white, between New England and New France, and again between the revolted colonists of New England and the loyal colonists of Canada. On the very spot where Champlain and his Algonquins had defeated the Iroquois, one hundred and fifty years later another conflict took place, curiously similar in some respects, though different enough in others. Again one side fought behind a barricade, while the other gallantly rushed to the assault, and again the defeat was overwhelming; but there the resemblance ends. Behind the impregnable breast-work at Ticonderoga stood Montcalm with his three or four thousand French; without stood Abercrombie, with fifteen thousand British regulars and Colonial militia. Abercrombie's one and only idea was to carry the position by assault, and throughout the long day he hurled regiment after regiment up the deadly slope, only to see them mown down by hundreds and thousands before the breastwork. Champlain's victory was one of civilisation over savagery; Montcalm's was one

of skill over stupidity.

Seventeen years after the battle of Ticonderoga, the Richelieu once more became the road of war. Down its historic waters came Montgomery, with his three thousand Americans, to capture Montreal and to be driven back from the walls of Quebec. Among all the singular circumstances that led up to and accompanied this disastrous attempt to relieve Canadians of the British yoke, none was more remarkable, or more significant, than the fact that the bulk of the plucky little army with which Guy Carleton successfully defended England's northern colony consisted of French-Canadians--the same down-trodden French-Canadians on whose behalf Congress had sent an army to drive the British into the sea. As for the Richelieu, having served for the better part of two centuries as the pathway of savage and civilised war, its energies were at length turned into channels of peaceful commerce.

V

THE RIVER OF THE CATARACT

That dread abyss! What mortal tongue may tell
The seething horrors of its watery hell!
Where, pent in craggy walls that gird the deep,
Imprisoned tempests howl, and madly sweep
The tortured floods, drifting from side to side
In furious vortices.
KIRBY.

Father Louis Hennepin, in his *New Discovery of a Vast Country in America*, gives the earliest known description of the river and falls of Niagara. "Betwixt the Lake Ontario and Erie," he says, "there is a vast and prodigious Cadence of Water which falls down after a surprising and astonishing manner, insomuch that the Universe does not afford its Parallel. 'Tis true, Italy and Suedeland boast of some such Things; but we may as well say they are but sorry Patterns, when compar'd

to this of which we now speak. At the foot of this horrible Precipice, we meet with the River Niagara, which is not above half a quarter of a League broad, but is wonderfully deep in some places. It is so rapid above this Descent that it violently hurries down the wild Beasts while endeavouring to pass it to feed on the other side, they not being able to withstand the force of its Current, which inevitably casts them down headlong above Six hundred foot. This wonderful Downfall is compounded of two great Cross-streams of Water, and two Falls, with an Isle sloping along the middle of it. The Waters which Fall from this vast height, do foam and boil after the most hideous manner imaginable, making an outrageous Noise, more terrible than that of Thunder; for when the Wind blows from off the South, their dismal roaring may be heard above fifteen Leagues off. The River Niagara having thrown itself down this incredible Precipice, continues its impetuous course for two Leagues together, to the great Rock, with an inexpressible Rapidity: But having passed that, its Impetuosity relents, gliding along more gently for two Leagues, till it arrives at the Lake Ontario, or Frontenac."

This same year, 1678, when Hennepin visited the great falls, La Salle, with his lieutenants Tonty and La Motte, were busy with preparations for their western explorations, and in these the Niagara River was to play an important part. It was about the middle of November when La Motte, with Father Hennepin and sixteen men, sailed from Fort Frontenac (Kingston) in a little vessel of ten tons. "The winds and the cold of the autumn," says Hennepin, "were then very violent, insomuch that our crew was afraid to go into so little a vessel. This oblig'd us to keep our course on the north side of the lake, to shelter ourselves under the coast against the north-west wind." On the twenty-sixth they were in great danger, a couple of leagues off shore, where they were obliged to lie at anchor all night. The wind coming round to the north-east, however, they managed to continue their voyage, and arrived safely at an Iroquois village called Tajajagon, where Toronto stands to-day. They ran their little ship into the mouth of the Humber, where the Iroquois came to barter Indian corn, and gaze in open-mouthed wonder at the marvellous inventions of the white men. Contrary winds and trouble with the ice kept them there until the fifth of December, when they crossed the lake to the mouth of the Niagara. "On the 6th, being St. Nicholas's Day," says Hennepin, "we got into the fine River Niagara, into which never any such Ship as ours enter'd before. We sung there Te Deum, and other prayers, to return our thanks to Almighty God for our prosperous voyage." After examining the river as far as Chippewa Creek, La Motte, Hennepin and the men set to work to build a cabin, surrounded by palisades, two leagues above the mouth of the river. The ground was frozen, and hot water had to be used to thaw it out before the stakes could be driven in. The Iroquois, who according to Hennepin had been very friendly on their arrival at the mouth of the river, presenting them with fish, imputing their

good fortune in the fisheries to the white men, and examining with interest and astonishment the "great wooden canoe," grew sullen and suspicious when they saw the strangers building a fortified house on what they considered peculiarly their own territory. La Motte and Hennepin went off to the great village of the Senecas, beyond the Genesee, to obtain their consent to the building of the fort, but without much success. Soon after their departure, La Salle and Tonty reached the Seneca village, on their way from Fort Frontenac to the Niagara. More persuasive, or more fortunate than his lieutenant, La Salle secured permission not only for the fortified post at the mouth of the river, but also for a much more important undertaking which he had planned, the building of a vessel at the upper end of the Niagara River, to be used in connection with his western explorations.

During the winter the necessary material for the *Griffin*, as the new vessel was to be called, was carried over the long portage to the mouth of Cayuga Creek, above the falls, where a dock was prepared and the keel laid. La Salle sent the master-carpenter to Hennepin to desire him to drive the first bolt, but, as he says, his profession obliged him to decline the honour. La Salle returned to Fort Frontenac, leaving Tonty to finish the work. The Iroquois, in spite of their agreement with La Salle, watched the building of the *Griffin* with jealous dissatisfaction, and kept the little band of Frenchmen in a state of constant anxiety. Fortunately, one of their expeditions against the neighbouring tribes took the majority of them off, and the work was pushed forward with redoubled zeal, so that it might be completed before their return. The Indians that remained behind were too few to make an open attack, but they did their utmost to prevent the completion of the ship. One of them, feigning drunkenness, attacked the blacksmith and tried to kill him, but was driven off with a red-hot bar. Hennepin naïvely remarks that this, "together with the reprimand he received from me," obliged him to be gone. A native woman warned Tonty that an attempt would be made to burn the vessel. Failing in this, the Senecas tried to starve the French by refusing to sell them corn, and might have succeeded but for the efforts of two Mohegan hunters, who kept the workmen supplied with game from the surrounding forest. Finally, the *Griffin* was launched, amid the shouts of the French and the yelpings of the Indians, who forgot their displeasure in the novel spectacle. She was towed up the Niagara, and on the seventh of August, 1679, La Salle and his men sailed out over the placid waters of Lake Erie, the booming of his cannon announcing the approach of the first ship of the upper lakes. In the *Griffin* La Salle sailed through Lakes Eric, St. Clair, and Huron, to Michilimackinac, and thence crossed Lake Michigan to the entrance to Green Bay, where some of his men, sent on ahead, had collected a quantity of valuable furs. These he determined to send back to Canada, to satisfy the clamorous demands of his creditors, while he continued his voyage to the Mississippi. The *Griffin* set sail for Niagara on the eighteenth of September. She

never reached her destination, and her fate has remained one of the mysteries of Canadian history.

VI

THE HIGHWAY OF THE FUR TRADE

Dear dark-brown waters, full of all the stain
Of sombre spruce-woods and the forest fens,
Laden with sound from far-off northern glens
Where winds and craggy cataracts complain,
Voices of streams and mountain pines astrain,
The pines that brood above the roaring foam
Of La Montague or Des Erables; thine home
Is distant yet, a shelter far to gain.
Aye, still to eastward, past the shadowy lake
And the long slopes of Rigaud toward the sun.
The mightier stream, thy comrade, waits for thee,
The beryl waters that espouse and take
Thine in their deep embrace, and bear thee on
In that great bridal journey to the sea.
LAMPMAN.

While Champlain was in Paris, in 1612, a young man, one Nicolas de Vignau, whom he had sent the previous year to visit the tribes of the Ottawa, reappeared, with a marvellous tale of what he had seen on his travels. He had found a great lake, he said, and out of it a river flowing north, which he had descended and reached the shores of the sea, where he had seen the wreck of an English ship. Seventeen days' travel by canoe, said Vignau, would bring one to the shores of his sea. Champlain was delighted, and prepared immediately to follow up this important discovery. He returned to Canada, and about the end of May 1613 set

out from Montreal with Vignau and three companions. The rest of the story is better told in Parkman's words--and Parkman is here at his very best.

"All day they plied their paddles, and when the night came they made their campfire in the forest. Day dawned. The east glowed with tranquil fire, that pierced, with eyes of flame, the fir-trees whose jagged tops stood drawn in black against the burning heaven. Beneath the glossy river slept in shadow, or spread far and wide in sheets of burnished bronze; and the white moon, paling in the face of day, hung like a disk of silver in the western sky. Now a fervid light touched the dead top of the hemlock, and, creeping downward, bathed the mossy beard of the patriarchal cedar, unstirred in the breathless air. Now, a fiercer spark beamed from the east; and now, half risen on the sight, a dome of crimson fire, the sun blazed with floods of radiance across the awakened wilderness.

"The canoes were launched again, and the voyagers held their course. Soon the still surface was flecked with spots of foam; islets of froth floated by, tokens of some great convulsion. Then, on their left, the falling curtain of the Rideau shone like silver betwixt its bordering woods, and in front, white as a snow-drift, the cataracts of the Chaudière barred their way. They saw the unbridled river careering down its sheeted rocks, foaming in unfathomed chasms, wearying the solitude with the hoarse outcry of its agony and rage."

While the Indians threw an offering into the foam as an offering to the Manitou of the cataract, Champlain and his men shouldered their canoes and climbed over the long portage to the quiet waters of the Lake of the Chaudière, now Lake Des Chênes. Past the Falls of the Chats and a long succession of rapids they made their way, until at last, discouraged by the difficulties of the river, they took to the woods, and made their way through them, tormented by mosquitoes, to the village of Tessouat, one of the principal chiefs of the Algonquins, who welcomed Champlain to his country.

Feasting, the smoking of ceremonial pipes, and a great deal of speech-making followed. Champlain asked for men and canoes to conduct him to the country of the Nipissings, through whom he hoped to reach the North Sea. Tessouat and his elders looked dubious. They had no love for the Nipissings, and preferred to keep Champlain among themselves. Finally, at his urgent solicitation, they agreed, but as soon as he had left the lodge they changed their minds. Champlain returned and upbraided them as children who could not hold fast to their word. They replied that they feared that he would be lost in the wild north country, and among the treacherous Nipissings.

"But," replied Champlain, "this young man, Vignau, has been to their country, and did not find the road or the people so bad as you have said."

"Nicholas," demanded Tessouat, "did you say that you had been to the Nipissings?"

"Yes," he replied, "I have been there,"

"You are a liar," returned the unceremonious host; "you know very well that you slept here among my children every night, and got up again every morning; and if you ever went to the Nipissings, it must have been when you were asleep. How can you be so impudent as to lie to your chief, and so wicked as to risk his life among so many dangers? He ought to kill you with tortures worse than those with which we kill our enemies."

Vignau held out stoutly for a time, but finally broke down and confessed his treachery. This "most impudent liar," as Champlain calls him, seems to have had no more substantial motive for his outrageous fabrication than vanity and the love of notoriety. Champlain spurned him from his presence, and in bitter disappointment retraced his steps to Montreal.

From the days of Champlain to the close of the period of French rule, and for many years thereafter, the Ottawa was known as the main thoroughfare from Montreal to the great west. Up these waters generation after generation of fur-traders made their way, their canoes laden with goods, to be exchanged at remote posts on the Assiniboine, the Saskatchewan, or the Athabasca, for skins brought in by all the surrounding tribes. Long before the first settler came to clear the forest and make a home for himself in the wilderness, these banks echoed to the shouts of French *voyageurs* and Indian canoe-men, and the gay songs of Old Canada. Many a weary hour of paddling under a hot midsummer sun, and many a long and toilsome portage, were lightened by the rollicking chorus of "En roulant ma boule," or the tender refrain of "A la claire fontaine." These inimitable folk-songs became in time a link between the old days of the fur-trade and the later period of the lumber traffic. It is indeed not so many years ago that one might sit on the banks of the Ottawa, in the long summer evenings, and, as the mighty rafts of logs floated past, catch the familiar refrain, softened by distance:

Rouli, roulant, ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule roulant,
En roulant ma boule.

VII

THE RED RIVER OF THE NORTH

But, in the ancient woods the Indian old,
Unequal to the chase,
Sighs as he thinks of all the paths untold,
No longer trodden by his fleeting race,
And, westward, on far-stretching prairies damp,
The savage shout, and mighty bison tramp
Roll thunder with the lifting mists of morn.
MAIR.

In September 1738 a party of French explorers left Fort Maurepas, near the mouth of the Winnipeg River, and, skirting the lower end of Lake Winnipeg in their canoes, reached the delta of the Red River of the North. Threading its labyrinthine channels, they finally emerged on the main stream. The commander of this little band of pathfinders--first of white men to see the waters of the Red River--was Pierre Gaultier de la Vérendrye, one of the most dauntless and unselfish characters in the whole history of exploration. Paddling up the river, La Vérendrye and his men finally came to the mouth of the Assiniboine, or the Forks of the Asiliboiles, as La Vérendrye calls it, where he met a party of Crees with two war-chiefs. The chiefs tried to dissuade him from continuing his journey toward the west, using the usual native arguments as to the dangers of the way, and the treachery of other tribes; but La Vérendrye had heard such arguments before, and was not to be turned from his purpose by dangers, real or assumed. He had set his heart on the discovery of the Western Sea, and as a means to that end was now on his way to visit a strange tribe of Indians whose country lay toward the south-west--the Mandans of the Missouri. Leaving one of his officers behind to build a fort at the mouth of the Assiniboine, about where the city of Winnipeg stands to-day, he continued his journey to the west. Somewhere near the present town of Portage la Prairie, he and his men built another small post, afterwards known as Fort La Reine. From this outpost he set out in October, with a selected party of twenty men, for an overland journey to the Mandan villages on the Missouri. Visiting a village of Assiniboines on the way, La Vérendrye arrived on the banks of the Missouri on the third of December. Knowing the value of an imposing appearance, he made his approach to the Mandan village as spectacular as possible. His men marched in military array, with the French flag borne in front, and as the Mandans crowded out to meet him, the explorer brought his little company to a stand, and had them fire a salute of three volleys, with all the available muskets, to the unbounded astonishment and no small terror of the Mandans, to whom both the white men and their weapons were entirely unknown. After spending some time

with the Mandans, La Vérendrye returned to Fort La Reine, leaving two of his men behind to learn the language, and pick up all the information obtainable as to the unknown country that lay beyond, and the prospects of reaching the Western Sea by way of the Missouri. The story of La Vérendrye's later explorations, and his efforts to realise his life-long ambition to reach the shores of the Western Sea, is full of interest, but lies outside the present subject.

Returning to the Red River of the North, and spanning the interval in time to the close of the eighteenth century, we find another party of white men making their way up its muddy waters. This "brigade" of fur-traders, as it was called, was in charge of a famous Nor'-Wester known as Alexander Henry, whose voluminous journals were resurrected from the archives of the Library of Parliament at Ottawa some years ago. Henry gives us an admirably full picture of the Red River country and its human and other inhabitants, as they were in his day. One can see the long string of heavily laden canoes as they forced their way slowly up the current of the Red River, paddles dipping rhythmically to the light-hearted chorus of some old Canadian *chanson.* At night the camp is pitched on some comparatively high ground, fires are lighted, kettles hung, and the evening meal despatched. Then the men gather about the camp-fires, fill their pipes, and an hour is spent in song and story. They turn in early, however, for the day's paddling has been long and heavy, and they must be off again before daylight on the morrow. So the story runs from day to day.

They reach the mouth of the Assiniboine, and Henry notes the ruins of La Vérendrye's old Fort Rouge. Old residents of Winnipeg will appreciate his feeling references to the clinging character of the soil about the mouth of the Assiniboine: "The last rain had turned it into a kind of mortar that adheres to the foot like tar, so that at every step we raise several pounds of it."

These were the days when the buffalo roamed in vast herds throughout the great western plains. One gets from Henry's narrative some idea of their almost inconceivable numbers. As he ascended the Red River, the country seemed alive with them. The "beach, once a soft black mud into which a man would sink knee-deep, is now made hard as pavement by the numerous herds coming to drink. The willows are entirely trampled and torn to pieces; even the bark of the smaller trees is rubbed off in places. The grass on the first bank of the river is entirely worn away." As the brigade nears the point where the international boundary crosses the Red River, an immense herd is seen, "commencing about half a mile from the camp, whence the plain was covered on the west side of the river as far as the eye could reach. They were moving southward slowly, and the meadow seemed as if in motion."

One further glimpse from Henry's Journal will serve to give some idea of life on the banks of the Red River at the beginning of the last century. Henry is

describing the "bustle and noise which attended the transportation of *five* pieces of trading goods" from his own fort to one of the branch establishments.

"Antoine Payet, guide and second in command, leads the van, with a cart drawn by two horses and loaded with his private baggage, cassettes, bags, kettles, etc. Madame Payet follows the cart with a child a year old on her back, very merry. Charles Bottineau, with two horses and a cart loaded with one and a half packs, his own baggage, and two young children, with kettles and other trash hanging on to it. Madame Bottineau, with a squalling infant on her back, scolding and tossing it about. Joseph Dubord goes on foot, with his long pipe-stem and calumet in his hand; Madame Dubord follows on foot, carrying his tobacco-pouch with a broad bead-tail. Antoine La Pointe, with another cart and horses, loaded with two pieces of goods and with baggage belonging to Brisebois, Jasmin and Pouliot, and a kettle hung on each side. Auguste Brisebois follows with only his gun on his shoulder and a fresh-lighted pipe in his mouth. Michel Jasmin goes next, like Brisebois, with gun and pipe, puffing out clouds of smoke. Nicolas Pouliot, the greatest smoker in the North-West, has nothing but pipe and pouch. These three fellows, having taken a farewell dram and lighted fresh pipes, go on brisk and merry, playing numerous pranks. Domin Livernois, with a young mare, the property of Mr. Langlois, loaded with weeds for smoking, an old worsted bag (madame's property), some squashes and potatoes, a small keg of fresh water, and two young whelps howling. Next goes Livernois' young horse, drawing a *travaille* loaded with his baggage and a large worsted *mashguemcate* belonging to Madame Langlois. Next appears Madame Cameron's mare, kicking, rearing, and snorting, hauling a *travaille* loaded with a bag of flour, cabbages, turnips, onions, a small keg of water, and a large kettle of broth. Michel Langlois, who is master of the band, now comes on leading a horse that draws a *travaille* nicely covered with a new-painted tent, under which his daughter and Mrs. Cameron lie at full length, very sick; this covering or canopy has a pretty effect in the caravan, and appears at a great distance in the plains. Madame Langlois brings up the rear of the human beings, following the *travaille* with a slow step and melancholy air, attending to the wants of her daughter, who, notwithstanding her sickness, can find no other expressions of gratitude to her parents than by calling them dogs, fools, beasts, etc. The rear guard consists of a long train of twenty dogs--some for sleighs, some for game, and others of no use whatever, except to snarl and destroy meat. The total forms a procession nearly a mile long, and appears like a large band of Assiniboines."

To the uninitiated, it may be explained that a *cassette* is a box for carrying small articles; calumet is, of course, the Indian pipe; a *travaille* is a primitive species of conveyance, consisting of a couple of long poles, one end fastened to a horse or dog, as the case may be, and the other trailing on the ground. Cross-bars

lashed midway hold the poles together, and serve as a foundation for whatever load, human or otherwise, it is intended to carry. *Mashguemcate* is a species of bag, a general receptacle for odds and ends.

VIII

THE MIGHTY MACKENZIE

I love thee, O thou great, wild, rugged land
Of fenceless field and snowy mountain height,
Uprearing crests all starry-diademed
Above the silver clouds.
LAUT.

There was a man in the western fur-trade who felt that other things were better worth while than the bartering of blankets and beads for beaver-skins. His heart responded to the compelling cry of the unknown, and one bright June day, in the year 1789, he set forth in quest of other worlds. The man was Alexander Mackenzie, and the worlds he sought to conquer were those of the far north. There was said to be a mighty river whose waters no white man had ever yet seen, whose source and outlet could only be guessed at, from the vague reports of Indians, whose banks were said to be infested with bloodthirsty tribes, and whose course was broken by so many and dangerous cataracts that no traveller might hope to navigate its waters and live.

Mackenzie, chafing at the dreary monotony of the fur-trader's life, listened eagerly to all such tales. He knew enough of Indian character to make due allowances for exaggerations; but had all that he heard been true, the prospect of danger would only have whetted his appetite for exploration. From his post, Fort Chipewyan, on Lake Athabasca, the way lay clear, and he launched his canoe, manned by four Canadian *voyageurs*, while his Indian interpreters and hunters followed in a second. To Great Slave Lake they were on familiar waters, but be-

yond all was conjecture.

To appreciate the magnitude of Mackenzie's undertaking, one must bear in mind that his object was to trace the mighty river that afterward bore his name to its mouth. He had no certain knowledge where it might empty--perhaps into the Arctic, possibly into the Pacific. In any case it involved a long journey, with all sorts of possible difficulties, human and natural; and as he must travel light, with only a limited supply of provisions, it was essential that he should go and return in one season--the very short season of these far northern latitudes. The natives whom he questioned ridiculed the idea of descending the Mackenzie to its outlet and returning the same season. They assured him that it would take him the entire season to go down; that winter would overtake him before he could begin the return journey; and that he would certainly perish of cold or starvation, even if he escaped the hostile tribes of the lower waters of the river.

Mackenzie was confident that the journey could be made in the season, but to succeed they must travel at top speed. He had picked men with him, and it was fortunate that he had, for the pace was almost killing. Half-past three in the morning generally saw them in the canoes and off for a long day's hard paddling. One day they paddled steadily from half-past two in the morning until six in the evening, except short stops for meals, covering seventy-two miles in spite of a head wind.

When they reached Great Slave Lake, they found it almost entirely covered with ice, though it was now the ninth of June. Coming down Slave River they had been tortured with mosquitoes and gnats, and the trees along the banks were in full leaf. This violent change was characteristic of the north. Five precious days were lost waiting for the ice to move, so that they might cross the lake. At last a westerly wind opened a passage, and after some perilous adventures they made the northern shore. Coasting slowly to the westward, about the end of the month they rounded the point of a long island, and Mackenzie found himself on the great river. The current increased as they travelled down stream, and it was possible to make good progress.

On they went, day after day. July 1st they passed the mouth of what the Indians called the River of the Mountain, afterward known as the Liard, where Fort Simpson was built many years later. As they proceeded, it became clear to Mackenzie that the river down which he was paddling must empty into the Arctic--but would it be possible to reach the ocean and return to Fort Chipewyan that season? The men were beginning to get discouraged, and it required all Mackenzie's enthusiasm and strength of purpose to keep them to the strenuous task. The tribes they met as they went north--Slaves and Dog-ribs and Hare Indians--did not prove as ferocious as they had been represented, but they one and all described the dangers of the river below as stupendous. The *voyageurs* grumbled,

but did not openly rebel. As for the Indians of Mackenzie's party, they were in open terror; expected at every turn of the river to come upon some of the fearful monsters of which the Slaves or Dog-ribs had warned them, and were only kept from deserting by Mackenzie's overmastering will. As they approached the mouth of the river, another terror was added--fear of meeting the Eskimos, for Indian and Eskimo were at deadly enmity. Altogether, the plucky explorer had troubles enough.

On the second of July he came within sight of the Rocky Mountains, whose glistening summits the Indians called *Manetoe aseniah*, or spirit-stones, and the following day he camped at the foot of a remarkable hill, constantly referred to in the narratives of Sir John Franklin, Richardson, and other later explorers, as the "Rock by the River Side." There is an admirable drawing of the rock, by Kendall, in the narrative of Franklin's second voyage.

A few days later Mackenzie passed the mouth of Bear River, draining that huge reservoir, Great Bear Lake, whose discovery remained for later explorers to accomplish, and about one hundred and twenty-five miles below he came to the Sans Sault Rapids--the fearful waterfall against which the natives had warned him. As a matter of fact it can be safely navigated at almost any season of the year.

Another thirty miles brought the explorer to the afterward famous Ramparts of the Mackenzie. Here the banks suddenly contract to a width of five hundred yards, and for several miles the travellers passed through a gigantic tunnel, whose walls of limestone rose majestically on either side to a height of from one hundred and twenty-five to two hundred and fifty feet.

At last they reached the delta of the river, and it was well that they were so near their destination, for the Indians were thoroughly demoralised and the *voyageurs* dispirited, provisions were running perilously low, and the short northern summer was rapidly drawing to its close. On July 12th the party emerged from the river into what seemed to Mackenzie to be a lake, but which was really the mouth of the river. The following day confirmation of this came with the rising tide, which very nearly carried off the men's baggage while they slept. Paddling over to an island, which he named Whale Island, to commemorate an exciting chase after a school of these enormous animals the previous day, Mackenzie erected a post, on which he engraved the latitude of the spot, his own name, the number of persons he had with him in the expedition, and the time spent on the island.

After a fruitless attempt to get in touch with the Eskimo, Mackenzie turned his face to the south, and, after a comparatively uneventful journey, arrived at Fort Chipewyan on September 12th, after a voyage of one hundred and two days. He had explored one of the greatest rivers of America, from Great Slave Lake to

the Arctic, and he had added to the known world a territory greater than Europe. Nor was this all, for Mackenzie's journey to the Arctic was but the introduction to his even more difficult, and more momentous, expedition of three years later, over the mountains to the shores of the Pacific. This, however, does not lie within the compass of the present sketch.

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